

Call of Civil Society Organizations to their Governments on the
New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa

3 June 2015

We, social movements, grassroots organizations and civil society organizations engaged in the defense of food sovereignty and the right to food in Africa, met at the World Social Forum in Tunis in March 2015 to unite those opposing the G8 “New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition”. Social movements and organizations from Africa shared their experiences and analysis about the impacts of the New Alliance in their countries and participants from all over the world agreed to support their struggles against this threat to food sovereignty and agro-ecology. As such, we joined the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles and adopted its Declaration.¹ This statement reflects our discussions and our demands to governments engaged in the New Alliance and expresses support for the call on the G7 Presidency made by the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa.²

To endorse this statement, please write to Gino Brunswijck: nafsn@aefjn.be

Small-scale food producers are collectively the leading investors in agriculture, estimated to produce 70% of the food in Africa.³ Addressing food and nutrition insecurity on the continent requires the full participation of those who are already producing, and promoting an agricultural system based on human rights and food sovereignty through local control over natural resources, seeds, land, water, forests, knowledge and technology. This is crucial for small-scale women and men farmers, pastoralists, livestock farmers, fisherfolk and hunter-gatherer societies. However, African governments and international donors support to African agriculture increasingly focuses on the extension of corporate led food and agricultural systems to the detriment of small-scale food producers.

One of the most worrying illustrations of this trend is the G8 “New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition”⁴, launched in 2012 by the G8 and implemented in ten African countries.⁵ The New Alliance, following similar initiatives such as AGRA and GROW Africa, is based on the simplistic assumption that corporate investment in agriculture will increase production and that this will automatically improve food and nutrition security and reduce poverty. This logic completely neglects that food and nutrition security means consistent access to a diverse and nutritious diet, which will not be achieved simply by increasing food production. Moreover, much of the production supported by the New Alliance is in crops with relatively low nutritional value as well as in crops which are destined for export and/or non-food production.

Notwithstanding the lack of transparency in implementation of the New Alliance, experiences on the ground and case studies confirm that the policies promoted by the New Alliance facilitate the grabbing of land and other natural resources, further marginalize small-scale

¹ Dakar to Tunis: Declaration of the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles (Tunis, 28 March 2015) <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/agrarian-reform-mainmenu-36/1775-declaration-of-the-global-convergence-of-land-and-water-struggles>

² African Civil Society Demands Inclusion of Food Sovereignty and the Right to Food in the Germany G7 Presidency Agenda. <http://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/AFSA-Demands-to-the-Germany-G7-Presidency-Agenda.pdf>

³ HLPE. 2013. Investing in smallholder agriculture for food security. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome. IFAD, UNEP 2013. Smallholders, food security and the environment. Rome.

⁴ Here after referred to as the New Alliance

⁵ Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal and Tanzania.

producers, and undermine the right to adequate food and nutrition.⁶ The New Alliance cooperation framework agreements were hastily erected on the mere promise that the initiative will “unleash the power of the private sector”, ignoring the risks that will fall on small-scale food producers and other marginalized groups.⁷ The agreements were made with no or little participation of small-scale food producers and groups affected by malnutrition, and they contain no concrete indicators on hunger and malnutrition. Furthermore, neither the G8 nor the G7 has a mandate to pursue these policy changes in other countries; the adequate forum for agreement to policy guidance is the UN Committee on World Food Security where all concerned parties have a voice.

The adoption of New Alliance policy commitments by African countries enables companies to do business through the easing of export controls and tax laws, changing seed laws in the favor of multi-national companies, and through governments facilitating transfers of community land to investors. In spite of the urgent need for tax revenue to fund rural community development, countries have agreed to reduce taxes on agribusiness and on the inputs used most heavily by large farms. Existing projects backed by the New Alliance threaten small-scale farmers control over land and seeds, marginalize local markets and contribute to loss of biodiversity and soil fertility. This undermines the livelihoods of local communities and adequate nutrition based, among others, on access to diverse and nutritious diets. In several countries, seed laws are being introduced that could effectively criminalize farmer-to-farmer seed exchange in the future.⁸ These policies and laws undermine peasants’ rights, bio-diversity, and the right to adequate food and nutrition. They will exacerbate future climate and economic shocks for small-scale farmers, instead of building their resilience to cope with such shocks. These changes are being made without national debate, thereby undermining democratic structures.

The Alternatives

Our organizations support investment alternatives made in response to the priorities of small-scale producers, and which contribute to the realization of the right to food. Alternative responses include provision of public services and infrastructure to support rural communities and local markets. Incentives such as public procurement, will allow small-scale producers to make additional investments and increase food production through decentralized, autonomous, local and sustainable food systems.

While the New Alliance emphasizes the need to “link smallholders to markets” the projects it supports privilege global markets dominated by corporate traders, ignoring the existent vibrant and diverse local food systems that ensure the sustenance of the majority of Africa’s population today. For small-scale producers market access in itself is not sufficient, but rather the conditions of their access are crucial as are the rules and logics by which particular markets operate. Small-scale producers are present above all in informal markets, which channel food for the majority of the population. Little data has been collected on existing food systems and more research and public investment should be targeted to support systems that are already working.

⁶ Nova Aliança do G8 Atinge e Usurpa Terra e Água de 50 mil Pessoas em Moçambique (ADECRU, March 2015) adecru.wordpress.com/2015/03/01/nova-alianca-do-g8-atinge-e-usurpa-terra-e-agua-de-50-mil-pessoas-em-mocambique/

- Take Action: Stop EcoEnergy’s Land Grab in Bagamoyo, Tanzania (ActionAid, March 2015)

- The Dominion Farms’ land grab in Nigeria (CEED, Environmental Rights Action/FoE Nigeria, Grain, Global Justice Now, January 2015)

⁷ A G8 Meeting that goes back to first principles (David Cameron, 2012) www.euobserver.com/opinion/118265

⁸ Land and seed laws under attack: who is pushing changes in Africa? (AFSA, GRAIN, January 2015) <http://www.grain.org/article/entries/5121-land-and-seed-laws-under-attack-who-is-pushing-changes-in-africa>

Supporting markets that respond to the logic of sustainable family farming can also have a positive impact on climate change, rural employment and migration flows. But it is crucial that small-scale food producers are in the driver's seat and have their own independent organizations to support them to retain control of their land, natural resources and projects that affect them.

The African Union and the G7 will hold their Heads of States Summit in June 2015. We call on all Governments participating in the New Alliance to:

- Stop all engagement in and support for the New Alliance. Governments should ensure that all other policies and programmes on food and nutrition security are coherent with their international human rights obligations, including in relation to the right to adequate food and nutrition, and follow the UN Food and Agricultural Organizations' Guidelines on the Right to Food, and the UN Committee on World Food Security's Land Tenure Guidelines.⁹
- Suspend implementation of policy commitments and projects until they are reviewed in each country by a multi-stakeholder platform that includes small-scale food producers' organizations and marginalized groups. Withdraw from those policies and projects that fail to promote the right to food, that undermine land access and the tenure rights of women and communities, or that prioritize business interests over those of marginalized population groups and the environment.
- Always defend the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent of all communities affected by land deals and their full participation in the governance of land and natural resources.
- Require full transparency of contracts and binding commitments for companies on rural employment and living wages, respecting ILO conventions with provisions for continual monitoring.
- Respect farmers' rights to produce, protect, use, exchange, promote and sell farm-saved seeds and expand support to farmer's owned seeds banks and systems. Stop and review all processes that lead to seed laws based on UPOV 1991, patents or other laws that threaten small-scale farmers' rights.
- Enact public policies that support small-scale food producers and advance food sovereignty, the right to food, and agroecology with the full involvement of small-scale producers, civil society organizations, consumers and their organizations at national and regional levels.

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⁹ Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security